



# PLACE

Spring/Summer 2026

**Brookline GreenSpace Alliance**  
is a non-profit membership organization  
dedicated to the enhancement of open  
space in Brookline by supporting residents  
in caring for their green spaces.

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Cover photo: Minot Rose Garden, John Shreffler

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## Message from Friends of Brookline Raptors

**N**ot long ago, Bald Eagles nearly vanished from our skies due to the secondary impacts of the pesticide DDT. Only after DDT was banned did these eagles make their remarkable comeback, becoming a powerful symbol of how smart environmental policy can restore wildlife. Today, however, eagles and many other predators face a new, quieter threat: Anti-coagulant Rodenticides (ARs), the toxic chemicals used to kill rats and mice that also poison animals throughout the food chain.

Anticoagulants are designed to kill rats and mice by causing internal bleeding, but they do not stop there. These poisons act slowly so the rats and mice that ingest them become increasingly lethargic before dying, making them easy targets for hawks, owls, eagles, foxes, coyotes, and other predators. The

poison then moves up the food chain, frequently killing the very animals that provide natural rodent control. Numerous hawks, owls, and eagles have died due to rodenticide poisoning, but domestic pets are also at risk—dogs and cats can be poisoned directly by bait or secondarily by catching affected rodents, often with devastating results.

We are Friends of Brookline Raptors, a grassroots advocacy group working to address this growing crisis through both education and policy. Brookline's municipal government has already taken a meaningful step by enacting a ban on the use of Anticoagulant Rodenticides on Town property, eliminating these poisons from parks, public buildings, and open spaces unless a strict waiver process is met. More recently, Brookline Town Meeting overwhelmingly passed a Home Rule Petition now before the Massachusetts Legislature as S.26, which would authorize the Town to prohibit or restrict the application of SGARs (Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides) within its borders. If enacted, this bill would give Brookline the legal authority to regulate the use of these poisons on private and commercial properties as well.

We and other advocates are also supporting statewide legislation (H.965 and S.2721), aimed at restricting the use of rodenticides across Massachusetts. Please call or write your representatives and tell them how important these bills are to you. Check our website for up-to-date information about action steps and for upcoming events sponsored by the Friends of Brookline Raptors: [friendsofbrooklineraptors.org](http://friendsofbrooklineraptors.org).

Legislative change is essential, but we do not need to wait for legislation to make a meaningful difference. Friends of Brookline Raptors emphasizes that individual actions matter deeply. Every homeowner, landlord, and property manager who voluntarily stops using rodenticides reduces the amount of poison in the environment. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) offers proven, effective alternatives: sealing entry points, removing food sources, improving sanitation, and using targeted traps when necessary. IPM not only controls rodents more sustainably, but it also avoids the unintended killing of wildlife and pets.

Anticoagulant rodenticides are the DDT of our generation, but if each of us takes action, rather than continuing to insidiously poison our environment, we can banish SGARs to the dustbin of history. Thank you for your support.



Immature Red Tail Hawk  
Photo: Amelia Szymkowicz,  
Friends of Halls Pond

## President's Message

Trees have been in the news in Brookline. In March 2025, the Town implemented a new Tree Preservation Bylaw that extends protection to trees on private land. Many volunteers turned out to help plant Brookline's second Miyawaki mini-forest in October 2025. The November 2025 Town Meeting adopted a resolution to protect heritage trees. Residents have gone to public hearings to call for preserving trees proposed for removal as part of the MBTA's accessibility project for the Green Line along Beacon Street.

This public interest in trees is impressive and gratifying. It reflects Brookline residents' concern about climate change. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and store carbon, removing it from the atmosphere. Recent research has found that urban trees are particularly effective at storing carbon. These findings reinforce Brookline residents' desire to protect the town's urban tree canopy. Research also has shown that mature trees are All Stars on the anti-climate change team.

Building new high-density housing near public transit is one effective way to fight climate change than protecting and planting trees. Studies support the intuitive conclusion that residents of multifamily housing near transit emit lower levels of greenhouse gases than those who live in houses in auto-dependent areas. However, it is not always easy to measure housing's impact on climate change. Someone moving from a house in Wellesley to a Coolidge Corner condo reduces their carbon footprint by more than a person who moves into that condo from a shared apartment in Back Bay.

Trees and transit-oriented development go hand-in-hand, parts of a strategy to combat climate change. Like walkable, high-density neighborhoods, trees reduce the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, but they do much more.

In densely-populated neighborhoods, trees are vital in mitigating the effects of climate change. They cool the air in "heat islands" and soak up the runoff from heavy rains from severe storms often caused by climate change.

Apart from fighting climate change, trees can encourage more people to opt for urban, transit-oriented life. When surveyed, many Americans say that they would prefer a suburban lifestyle. Maintaining a robust urban tree canopy, as well as attractive parks and open spaces, can help to persuade people that high-density living can be "green" in every sense of that word.

For all these reasons, we should recognize that transit-oriented development and protecting the tree canopy are complementary strategies for responding to climate change.

Trees are important for reasons not directly related to climate change. Studies show that people enjoy better mental and physical health when they are surrounded by trees. In addition to absorbing carbon, trees remove other pollutants from the air. They also serve as key components in the urban ecosystem, providing a habitat for assorted wildlife essential to the food chain.

In time to come, issues related to trees and tree protection will continue to be prominent in Brookline—and tree proponents will be active and engaged. Initial discussions of a potential May 2026 tax override suggested a potential ballot question would include funding for staff to fully implement the Tree Preservation Bylaw. As the MBTA undertakes construction on Brookline Green Line stations, residents will be watching closely to see if the MBTA lives up to its commitments to protect existing trees and plant new ones. Brookline Mothers Out Front will be helping to plant pocket forests and launching a "Trees We Love" campaign. The Brookline GreenSpace Alliance is committed to being a staunch advocate for Brookline's tree canopy. We hope that Brookline residents will continue to support our community's trees.

*Sean Lynn-Jones, President of BGSA*

# The New Brookline Open Space and Recreation Master Plan: A Development Overview

*The Sustainability and Natural Resources Division is excited to announce the completion of Brookline's ninth Open Space and Recreation Plan.*

Since 1976, the Town of Brookline has participated in formal open space and recreation planning. The past decades have demonstrated the need to preserve existing open space and natural resources, increase the footprint and connectivity of parks, playgrounds, and green spaces, integrate climate preparedness and resilience into the management of private and public property, and increase tools for communication and engagement between the Town of Brookline and its residents. This current Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) builds upon successes and challenges learned during the execution of the 2018 OSRP and highlights Brookline's commitment to ecological connectivity, open space protection, recreational opportunities, and climate action.

A community's OSRP has a few distinct purposes. In addition to qualifying the Town for relevant state and federal grants, it provides:

- A clear, cohesive reference of open space assets and resource;
- A summary of open space needs;
- A roadmap to achieve identified open space and recreation goals.

The development of Brookline's 2025 OSRP was a comprehensive effort involving community engagement and professional analysis. The plan was drafted over an 18-month period in 2024 and 2025 and was led by the 2025 OSRP Committee. This Committee included representatives from the following boards, commissions, and community organizations: Select Board, Conservation Commission, Advisory Committee, Economic Development Advisory Board, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, Bicycle Advisory Committee, Commission on Disability, Conservation Land Trust, Council on Aging, Brookline Mothers Out Front, Climate Action Brookline, Park and Recreation Commission, Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Brookline Planning Board, Trustees of Walnut Hills Cemetery, Preservation Commission, Transportation Board, and Tree Planting Committee.

Subcommittees were established to identify needs and develop goals in key focus areas, all with an ever-present and priority focus on climate action. Subcommittee focus areas included: Greenways and Transportation, Open Space Protection and Zoning, and Resource Protection and Infrastructure.

The Committee relied on information from existing planning documents such as Brookline's Comprehensive Plan, the Parks, Open Space and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, the Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan, and previous Open Space and Recreation Plans to understand the desires and needs of the community. Building upon these documents, the current Open Space and Recreation Plan was developed to address evolving community needs. To learn about these needs and about open space and recreation concerns, the Committee hosted multiple hybrid public forums in different neighborhoods across Brookline and created a digital survey to gather community input, whose results are included in the final document.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee held over two dozen public meetings throughout 2024 and 2025. The Committee began the drafting process by developing the Community Vision and addressing the question "What is the ideal future for open space in Brookline and what does it look like?" The Committee then



Muddy Riveer. Photo by John Shreffler

considered what was needed to meet the drafted Community Vision. In particular, the Committee considered how to expand and protect open space, better engage with the community, and build stronger collaborations across Town departments, boards, and commissions with a focus on open space and recreation. From there, the Committee determined the broad steps needed to address the identified needs and turned those into a series of goals and objectives. Finally, the Committee developed an Action Plan that includes the specific actions that are needed to meet the defined goals and objectives. The Action Plan includes the timeline, funding level and source, responsible parties, and prioritizes each of the action items.

In addition to the Committee’s work, Town of Brookline staff worked with the Conservation Commission to update urban development statistics, catalogue local environmental and natural resources, completely redesign the asset inventory to maximize readability and usability, and update all relevant maps and figures. The resulting OSRP thus is much more useful and reader-friendly. The inventory of parks and open provides a helpful guide to these community resources.

The Committee’s work resulted in an Action Plan that not only meets state requirements, but includes additional information—including a detailed inventory of lands of conservation and recreation interest—and analysis that will make it exceptionally useful for Town staff and residents as they consider the next steps for open space and recreation in Brookline. In constructing the Action Plan, Sustainability and Natural Resources Division staff collaborated with and received input from a variety of other staff teams including the Planning Department, Recreation Department, Engineering and Transportation Division, and Parks and Open Space Division. The plan’s development process captures the collaborative effort needed to maintain, enhance, preserve, and expand Brookline’s open space and recreational assets.

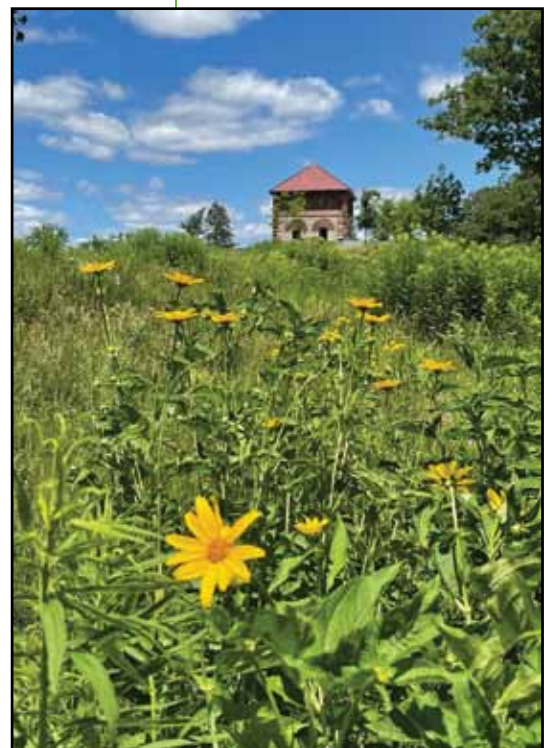
The 2025 OSRP update includes action items such as Development of new wildlife habitat areas in existing parks and open spaces; Expansion of green infrastructure on public lands; Creation of new open space during Complete Streets projects and the development of private property; Protection of trees on public and private property to preserve and grow the urban canopy; Incorporation of additional seating, paths, shade, and hydration into passive open spaces; Increase of trail connections; Creation of educational resources showcasing parks, sanctuaries, natural areas and walking paths and routes connecting them; and Collaboration with the community to create and support new Parks Friends groups.

The 2025 OSRP reflects the Town’s diverse open space system, its complex needs, and the many open space and recreation goals of the community. Through a robust community process, led by an interdisciplinary Committee of community representatives, the Plan captures the best of Brookline and positions the Town to carry on its long-standing legacy of open space preservation and protection for many years.

To learn more, visit <https://www.brooklinema.gov/664/Open-Space-and-Recreation-Plan>

*Alex Cassie, Conservation and Natural Resources Manager  
Town of Brookline Department of Public Works*

Fisher Hill Reservoir Park.  
Photo by John Shreffler



## The New Tree Preservation Bylaw Explained

A healthy urban forest nurtures a healthy community, supplying shade, cooling, clean air, animal habitat, flood mitigation, and carbon removal. To help maintain and grow our urban forest, Brookline implemented a new Tree Preservation Bylaw that went into effect on March 27, 2025. This bylaw was modeled in part on Cambridge's tree protection bylaw. In October of 2025 Cambridge announced a 5% increase in their tree canopy since 2018. Brookline could also see a reversal from canopy loss to overall canopy gain. Our updated bylaw covers two types of activities: tree removal and tree protection.

### Tree Removal

The bylaw aims to minimize the cutting of large, healthy trees that provide benefits not only to the property owner, but to the community. The larger the tree, the greater the benefits.

If a property owner removes a healthy tree, the owner must either replant according to guidelines, pay into the Town's Tree Fund established to plant and maintain trees on public property, or a combination. (Removing a large, healthy tree exacts a larger mitigation fee than removing a smaller one.) A property owner is not required to mitigate if one of these conditions is met:

- the tree is unhealthy or hazardous;
- its removal is necessary for the health and enhancement of neighboring trees;
- its removal is necessary in order to install solar panels;
- the owner qualifies for financial hardship.

All replanting plans must promote the long-term survival of the new trees. For invasive species, the Town's Reviewing Agent determines whether it requires mitigation based on the tree's individual circumstances and climate benefits.

### Guideline

The bylaw states that a Tree Impact and Removal Permit is required to remove any tree with a 6" or greater DBH (diameter at breast height), also known as a Protected Tree. This helps the Town keep track of how many trees are being lost annually. (Permit applications are available through the Town's website: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/3709/Tree-Protection-Removal>). To determine the DBH (Diameter at Breast Height) of your tree, measure the circumference of the trunk 4'6" above the ground.

### Mitigation Formula

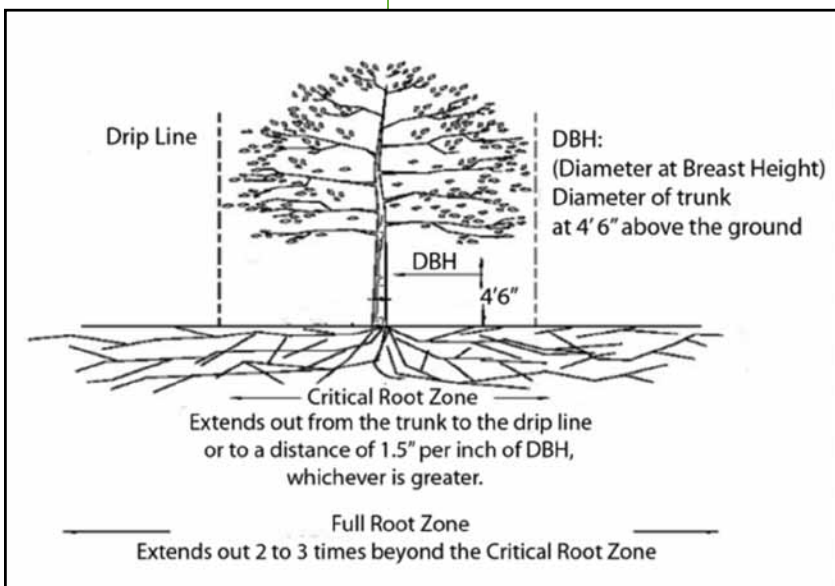
You may mitigate by planting replacement trees, paying into the Town's Tree Preservation Fund, or a combination.

For trees 6"- 25" DBH the required mitigation of replacement trees is the same as the tree's DBH.

For trees 25"- 40" DBH, multiply the tree's DBH by 1.5 to determine the required mitigation.

For Trees 40" - 55" DBH, multiply the tree's DBH by 2 to determine the required mitigation.

For Trees 55" DBH or greater, multiply the tree's DBH by 3 to determine the required mitigation.



Now add up the total amount of required mitigation for each tree. This sum is the total DBH to be mitigated. If you can't plant this amount of DBH, you must pay \$500 per inch into the Town's Tree Preservation Fund. Some choose to replant what they can and pay \$500 per inch for what was not replanted. If this seems confusing, check out the Mitigation Estimator found on the Town's Tree Preservation Bylaw webpage. The link can be found under the tab: Calculate Your Mitigation Requirement.

### Tree Protection

Often we judge a tree by its trunk, branches, and leaves. These rely on the root structure beneath. If the critical root zone is damaged, the tree could be at risk. This is why the new bylaw also requires a Tree Protection and Mitigation Plan to protect trees within 30' of construction that alters the footprint of a building or involves demolition/excavation activity related to a new structure. This pertains not only to the trees on the site but also to the trees within 30' of construction on an adjacent property. Tree protection involves fencing off the trees near the site in order to protect their critical root zone during work. Property owners who fail to adhere to a Tree Protection and Mitigation Plan will be fined and issued a stop work order.

### Bylaw Administration

The bylaw is being administered through the Brookline Department of Public Works's Sustainability Division, which includes a part-time staff person, Linda Ciesielski. All inquiries related to the bylaw should be directed to [treepreservation@brooklinema.gov](mailto:treepreservation@brooklinema.gov).

### Additional Details

For more information, go to the Town of Brookline's website at <https://www.brooklinema.gov/3709/Tree-Preservation-Bylaw>, a resource generated by the Sustainability and Natural Resources Director, Alexandra Vecchio, who reports that "Since the Tree Preservation Bylaw took effect in March 2025, the Sustainability Division has built a clear permitting process, created public tools and guidance, and begun tracking tree loss and replacement in a consistent way. Mitigation payments and replanting requirements have generated about \$70K over the course of 12 months and those will be reinvested into planting and caring for trees on public property."

### Where do we go from here?

These efforts will depend on the outcome of the expected May 2026 override, which probably will include funding for additional staff to implement the Tree Preservation Bylaw. Erin Chute, Public Works Commissioner sums it up: "Our Sustainability and Natural Resources Director, Alexandra Vecchio, has done an exceptional job creating the processes, protocols, and multi department training needed to bring this bylaw to life. Administering it is meaningful, but is also labor-intensive and currently relies on a great deal of staff time from both the Sustainability and Parks and Open Space Directors, two town arborists, landscape architects, conservation staff, administrative team, engineering staff, and a grant-funded part-time project manager. The strain is real. Sustaining this effort, and the staff needed to run it, is part of the override being considered in May 2026, because a healthy urban forest is essential to a sustainable, resilient community."

*Olivia Fischer Fox, Tree Team Co-coordinator,  
Brookline Mothers Out Front*



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## Get Involved

Have an idea for a park project? Opportunities exist to improve your neighborhood park. Do you have the approval of the Director of the Parks and Open Space Division? Apply for a small grant from the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance. More information at [brooklinegreenspace.org](http://brooklinegreenspace.org).

## Support the Alliance



**MAY 31, 2:00–4:00 PM**  
**361 WASHINGTON STREET, BROOKLINE**

Meet Zak Mertz and a friendly raptor from the New England Wildlife Center at the Public Library of Brookline, Brookline Village, 361 Washington Street, on Sunday, May 31, 2:00–4:00 p.m., to learn about the importance of these birds of prey in our ecosystem and how to protect them. Hosted by the Public Library of Brookline and co-sponsored by the Friends of Brookline Raptors and the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance.

<https://friendsofbrooklineraptors.org/>